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AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

JEFFREY S. BRAVIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Testimony

Jeffrey S. Bravin

Executive Director, American School for the Deaf

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As a deaf man and a seasoned professional in deaf education, I am writing in support of SB 873 AAC.

The ability to effectively communicate with our friends, family, colleagues and others is vital to having a full and successful life. In order for one to become an educated, self-directed citizen, one must be able to communicate. We, at the American School for the Deaf (ASD), and I, as a deaf individual, support whatever means necessary including amplification to achieve that goal.

The most significant challenge we face in educating deaf and hard of hearing children and adults is establishing the concept of language and providing them with the ability to acquire language and literacy. Hearing aids are one of the tools we utilize in this process.

As with other technological advancements, hearing aid technology has vastly improved in recent years. At ASD, we are using the new, state-of-the-art Phonak amplification system which allows children with hearing aids to maximize the use of their residual hearing. The results are impressive. It is fortunate that the legislature has realized the importance of providing aids at an early age and providing help in defraying the cost of hearing aids for children. Unfortunately, adult aids are not subsidized, and with the



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improvement in technology comes an exponential increase in cost. The most effective aids can cost the user \$7,000-\$10,000, a cost that most working people cannot afford.

Deaf and hard of hearing adults who are pre-lingually deaf or suffer from age or illness related deafness should be afforded financial support in the form of a credit towards the purchase of hearing aids. Without amplification, these citizens will find it difficult to reach their full potential and become fully contributing members of society.

Should the legislature choose to pass this bill, they will be investing in a group of individuals with underutilized capabilities and allow them to realize that potential. With proper amplification, individuals could secure better jobs, interact more fully with their community and lead more fulfilled lives.

I'm asking that the Senate lend its full support to SB 873 AAC.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey S. Bravin